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# INTELLIGENCER

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## Did Britain Use Spy 'Newsmen'?

AN UNPUBLISHED REPORT to the United Nations claims British intelligence agents set up a worldwide news-and-book-publishing operation as cover for spreading anti-Communist propaganda during the Cold War.

The effort had Washington's "complete cooperation," according to a 1949 United States State Department cable cited by the report's author, Richard Fletcher.

His study says a British Secret Service official helped launch wire services in the Mideast, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Until recently, the news agencies allegedly were feeding stories to local media. This "covert planting" of information was used to weaken support for regimes and movements of which the West disapproves, adds the report, prepared for the U.N. Educational, Scien-

tific and Cultural Organization probe of the media.

Fletcher alleges that one "bogus company funded by the Secret Service" was set up with a sizable staff ostensibly to distribute Reuters wire service in the Arab world, and functioned into the late 1960s. Reuters has denied a 1977 New York *Times* story that quoted a CIA source as saying the company knew it was used for covert activities. Last week, Reuters managing director Gerald Long responded to Fletcher's report, saying, "It was suggested that they [the Secret Service company] were a government organization, but it didn't worry me greatly because they had no possibility of influencing Reuters."

In any event, Britain's James Bonds are said to have pulled out of most of their journalism ventures by the end of 1979.